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**FOR
AN**

**INDUSTRIAL
REVOLUTION!**

Publication of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist).



FOR AN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION!

BRITAIN: A NATION OF LABOUR

Of all countries in the world Britain is the most proletarian. Here the vast majority are workers and the tiny minority are capitalist. We are an industrial people - that is, a vast organism of industrial skills and knowledge in which each part is of vital importance to the whole.

Where other peoples may have natural resources in abundance, we, the British working class, are our principal natural resource. The wealth of our country rests only in our brains - in the industrial mind of our class.

Britain was the first industrial country and science and industry developed here first because of the accumulation of capital - human and thus material. All the great landmarks in the growth of industry were dependent on the development and continuity of industrial skill - from the millwright to the engineer from Whitworth to Whittle. Because in finality industry is only labour - past and present, its future depends on the transmission and development of industrial skill and knowledge from one generation to the next.

The British working class has always fought for its skills. We are a highly literate, highly educated and cultured class. Our forebears fought for universal education - now under attack; for proper training and apprenticeship for the young, fast disappearing; and always against the abuse and degradation of skill by employers - now increasing everywhere.

Britain's industrial identity was founded upon manufacture - especially engineering. Even though now less than a third of our class are employed directly in manufacturing industry

all those who go to work, be they teacher, technician, clerk or nurse - all have a vital interest in its future. All organs of labour are 'socially necessary' in the organisation of production; but whatever role they play, it is manufacturing and its skills which are at the heart of industrial life. Its future, like health and education (and all other possessions vital to our class) is far too important to be the concern of only those who work in it.

Throughout the industrial revolution and even after it had passed its zenith, capitalism in Britain still had need of an industrial people, albeit for exploitation and profit. Today capitalism is in decline - now very rapid decline. It stumbles from day to day, lashes out wildly in all directions, dispenses with skill and human capital - invests less and less for the future. It creates no substantially new industry. In doing so, it threatens, as a parasite the host upon which it feeds. It spells ruin for our people - industrial counter-revolution the basis of fascism.

The industrial history of Britain in the last decade has been one of ruin - of jobs lost, of skills dispersed, industries abolished. A vast contraction in the skilled manufacturing workforce has occurred as a result of capitalism's attempt to wring the last ounce of short-term profit from fewer people and even weaker and more ramshackle industrial organisations, to get something for nothing at home while investing more and more abroad.

If manufacturing industry is destroyed, in finality it is we who are destroyed. It falls to us to save not only our skills but the entire future and identity of our people. The alternative is unthinkable. No longer can we merely adapt to industrial decay, we have the responsibility to challenge it.. No longer can we refuse to take the long term view. The British working class must make a reconnaissance of the whole anatomy of industry, of all skill - for revolution - for an industrial future - for true progress! Hence this pamphlet.

STEEL

No longer is the battle for steel confined only to questions of wages and conditions, or even individual job security. It is far from something which concerns only steel workers - it is a vital part of the battle for the future of all manufacturing in Britain - for the future of a working class.

Steel is at the heart of every industrial process; quite literally, the backbone of an industrial nation. We must all fight to save this industry from going the way of coal mines, railways, machine tools. For the nation which pioneered industrialized steelmaking, that would be the ultimate disaster.

Of all the events which have influenced the future of steel in Britain, the June 5th, 1975 Referendum result marked a critical point. With the 'yes' vote, the government and the BSC chiefs had taken the political temperature of a working class. They gauged the time ripe to renew their attacks upon steel workers. The European Coal and Steel Community has ordered a cut-back in British steel production under Article 46 of the Treaty of Paris. Despite their denial in May 1975, that they were attacking British Steel, the EEC Commission deliberately withheld details of its plans until after the Referendum.

Prior to June 5th, as a result of the struggles of workers throughout the industry, a stay of execution was granted for East Moors at Cardiff, Shotton and Hartlepool. Then came the Referendum result - BSC counter attacked.

The strategy of the Corporation remains unchanged. Their original plan, set out at the end of 1972 in the White Paper 'Steel - a ten-year development strategy', was to close virtually all inland steel-making plants and to concentrate the industry in five coastal sites.

Instead of modernising all existing plants throughout Britain, basing the industry geographically on people and skills, whole communities would be destroyed. At least fifty thousand would be sacked, over a quarter of the labour force. Towns like

Ebbw Vale would be completely wiped out. The whole of Wales in particular, an eighth of whose workers work in steel (many more in related industries) would be severely affected. The same fate awaits Deeside, Shelton, Teesside and many Scottish steel towns. In announcing the intention to enforce 40,000 redundancies in order to save £170m, steel boss Scholey made the comment, "... and this is just for starters."

On May 15th, 1975 two hundred delegates from the steel industry attended a conference in Sheffield arranged by the National Craftsman's Coordinating Committee (NCCC). They unanimously rejected the Corporation's plans for redundancy. The BSC's response was a new document demanding forty thousand redundancies in two years. It cut wages on average by about £15 to £20 per week by suspending the guaranteed week agreement which ensured at least eighty per cent of average earnings under all conditions. 'Flexible working practices' were to be adopted and those workers remaining must work harder for less money - all this supposedly to deal with a 'cash crisis' which has been carefully orchestrated by BSC and the EEC Commission. The result was the action which workers took at Port Talbot, Ebbw Vale, Llanwern, Shelton, Trostre and Velindre. At Port Talbot production and white collar workers gave each other support in the strike, proving that preserving a 'staff' job is equally as important as preserving a 'craft' and 'production' job. In towns like Port Talbot there are no alternatives to jobs in steel.

For what and for whom is all this talk of 'development' and 'progress'? Do we accept that BSC is 'inefficient', 'unprofitable' and 'overmanned'? Between 1970 and 1975, steel production was cut by 8.19m tonnes - imports in 1975 stood at 4.5m tonnes! - 23 per cent of national production!

BSC's plans represent an end to steel-making in Britain as we know it - a mad plan which would destroy whole towns in the rush for profits. We must ask new questions - whom will it profit to sack a quarter of an industry, to make less steel, to

import more steel and destroy whole communities? Will it profit a working class? Our answer can only be No! Steel will not be destroyed.

MACHINE TOOLS

Machine tools are the starting point of all production, all modernisation, all technical innovation. Wherever metal is shaped into a workpiece by milling, planing, turning or grinding a machine tool does the work. The capacity to produce machine tools in Britain is proof of the advanced engineering level of our class. This capacity in fact is the key to the industrial future of Britain.

It is precisely because of this that the defence of this industry - or more exactly its skills - is of vital importance to every working man and woman in Britain - vital in the defence of their skills too.

Despite the vicious rationalisations which have occurred, of which the tragic story of Alfred Herbert is the best example, the industry still employs about 49,000, of whom 500 are scientists and technologists and over 20,000 skilled craftsmen. They are spread across the country, but particularly concentrated in Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester.

Yet the whole future of the industry is now under greater threat than at any other time in its history. Firstly, industrial investment throughout Britain in new plant and machinery is at its lowest level for twenty years. Yet capital outflow from Britain is higher than ever, particularly to EEC countries. This means that home orders for machine tools have fallen dramatically (by 23 per cent between mid-1974 and mid-1975).

Secondly, more machine tools are being imported than ever before, particularly from EEC countries. The total value of imports from all countries (represented at current prices) rose from £67.6m in 1973 to £114.9m in 1975 (i.e. 70 per cent). Over the same period imports from EEC

have risen at a similar rate and account for over half all machine tools coming into Britain. Over the last ten years the increase in imports of machine tools has been dramatic; from 25 per cent of home demand in 1965, to 33 per cent in 1969-70, to 59 per cent in 1975!

Thirdly, however, the industry has been attacked by capitalism from within. 'Efficiency' has been gained, not through adequate investment and modernisation, but by chopping off whole branches of firms and the concentration of ownership in fewer hands. Taking Herbert's as an example: it was once the largest machine tool manufacturer in Europe and the jewel of Coventry's industrial crown. Even in 1967 it still employed over 11,000; now it employs 6,800. Since 1968 the industry as a whole has seen about 11,500 jobs abolished. It is an industry high in skill; yet not only has the workforce been chopped again and again, but so has the proportion of skilled craftsmen: from 49 per cent in 1965, to 45 per cent in 1970, to 40 per cent in 1975!

Investment by British machine tool manufacturers has been very low. From 1970 to 1974 gross investment per employee in Britain was £361, compared with US firms £435 and West Germany £600. Again, in comparison with West German firms the ratio of investment per employee to profit per employee is about double!

What all this means is that British capitalism has been creaming off a higher level of profit from its machine tool firms, re-investing very little and thus leaving an increasing share of its market open to foreign manufacturers. In other words, it has been killing the goose that lays the golden egg - not just for this industry, but the whole of manufacture.

Why do we tolerate such industrial treachery? Why flatter ourselves for instance, that a 'Labour' National Enterprise Board in 1976 will not complete the ruination of this industry which was begun by a 'Labour' Industrial Reorganisation Corporation ten years ago! Either capitalism will finally tear

the heart out of engineering, or we tear the heart out of capitalism!

AEROSPACE

Aircraft manufacture probably demands the most highly skilled engineering and engineering design knowledge of any industry. But the aircraft industry is being run down, just like all other industry in this country.

The British aerospace industry is special in being the only integral one outside of the USA and Russia - making airframes, aero-engines and the complete range of components, as well as designing the complete aircraft. But since the Second World War this self-sufficiency has been steadily whittled away until we now reach the stage where an integrated European aerospace industry is the prospect, with only certain parts of the British industry having a role. Britain for example, might first make the engines, instead of designing and manufacturing the whole aircraft. (See THE WORKER No. 2 1976).

In 1945 the techniques and skills in the British industry were second to none, and the industry was second only to the USA in output. However, since then there has been a dismantling of the industry in the name of rationalisation. In 1946 there were no fewer than 55 different British aircraft, 22 of them aimed at the civil market. Companies making airframes included Airspeed, Handley Page, Hawker, Heston, Percival, Miles, A.V. Roe and Vickers, while there were seven firms making aero-engines; Alvis, Armstrong-Siddeley, de Havilland, Bristol, Metro-Vickers, Napier and Rolls-Royce. All these firms had design teams, but the amalgamation of the separate firms in Britain only meant stripping the entire industry of many of its skills and destroying much collective knowledge by dismantling these teams.

Today we only have two large airframe companies, BAC and

Hawker-Siddeley and one aero-engine firm, Rolls-Royce. Plans are afoot to amalgamate the two airframe companies into one, in line with the policy for a single European industry. This policy has been in evidence for several years with the increasing dependence on joint research and manufacture with other European countries - Concorde, Jaguar, the MRCA and helicopters.

The industry's history since the war has been littered with cancelled projects, some of which were world-beaters. All were strangled by capitalism and its government through lack of investment or government indecision which was in line with their long-term strategy to dismantle the industry. Such projects were the Brabazon and Comet; the VC10 was made impotent in terms of sales (it was a clear leader in terms of design and passenger preference). The Americans were given a free hand to study our research on three-engined jets which led to several years lead, by the Boeing 727, over the British Tridents, hovercrafts, variable wing geometry. The list is endless.

One project conspicuous for its omission in the above list is the TSR2. The cancellation of this military aircraft project (by a Labour Government) eventually cost Britain £1000m abroad due to the government buying similar aircraft from the US. This cancellation put 20,000 highly trained scientists and engineers out of work, never to work on aircraft again.

Concorde is now the end of the line as far as progress in the British industry goes. There are no plans to build anything remotely as sophisticated. When Concorde finishes, so will the British aerospace industry as we know it. One thousand two hundred workers employed by BAC are to be served with formal notices of redundancy, (not including those who will have to retire early or are being 'redeployed' on more mundane projects, which doubles the figure). Even if other airlines decide to order Concorde, it is feared in the industry that it will be too late to stop the skilled teams from being broken up.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

One hundred years after the invention of the telephone, telecommunication forms the nervous system of any industrial society - a vast complex of pathways which daily transmit millions of pieces of information from one centre to another.

Nowhere is this more pronounced than in Britain, whose telephone system is third largest in the world, (6,300 local exchanges, 99.5 per cent of calls dialled direct). The inland telex system is the fourth largest in the world with 51 million calls in 1974-75. Other major parts of the system include the inland datel service, international telephones (73 million calls in 1974-75), international telex (82 million calls in 1974-75) as well as international telegram and datel services, private telephone services, maritime services, etc.

The telecommunications industry, the bulk of whose production is supplied to the Post Office (75 per cent of total output in 1974) is under severe attack. Since 1974 when the PO chiefs first announced a 'planned' cutback in orders in telecomms equipment, estimates of cuts have been revised upwards several times. In November 1975 the PO told the major suppliers (principally giants like GEC, Plessey and STC) that the cutbacks would be 38 per cent in 1975-76 and 31 per cent in 1976-77. The entire industry, which employs about 88,000 throughout Britain, is to be severely cut and an estimated 18,000 to 20,000 will lose their jobs - and all this in the name of progress!

This is because, besides the PO cutbacks, one of the main reasons is the change (now accelerating) towards all-electronic exchanges. Britain for years relied on a type of electro mechanical exchange gear called Strowger, which in concept was little changed from original equipment designed at the turn of the century. Although it worked well, it was held to be noisy, slow and needed much more labour and skill to manufacture, install and maintain. Britain continued with this system long after other countries went over to more advanced systems and only

in the 1950's and 60's adopted, in part, a technically superior electro mechanical system called Crossbar. Now the move is towards an all-electronic exchange called TXE 4 which requires much less engineering skill and labour to manufacture and operate. With the revised telecomms cutbacks emphasis on all-electronic orders has been increased, with a 25 per cent cutback in Strowger, and an 85 per cent increase in TXE 4 equipment.

Although electronic exchanges are less bulky, transmit faster and are said by some to have many advanced technical features, they do not represent 'progress' when thousands face the sack.

GEC and Plessey between them supply 80 per cent of all PO telecomms orders. In 1973, GEC cut its telecomms workforce from 29,700 to 26,700. Plessey too cut back. Now all the major manufacturers are sacking many workers. Some of the major redundancies are as follows:

<u>GEC</u>	<u>Jobs Lost</u>
West Chirton	300
Accrington	500
Raglan Street)	230
Helen Street) Coventry	400
Total redundancy in Britain	2,800

Plessey's

Closure Pioneer Works: Wigan.

Total redundancy in Britain 2,000

Standard Telephone and Cable

Closure Larne factory - 760 redundancies.

North Woolwich London - 1,000 redundancies.

Pye TMC

Dulwich - 500 redundancies.

Both GEC and Plessey illustrate the 'sack and squeeze' strategy of 'fast buck' capitalism. For instance, between 1971 and 1975 the whole of the Plessey organisation sacked over 11,000 workers (17 per cent of total) and raised profits per worker per annum from £497 to £927. Similarly GEC sacked 14 per cent (in all 36,000) and raised profit per worker from £408 in 1971 to £1,050 in 1975.

While it is easy to blame the PO for the axe which is being wielded throughout the industry, it is the suppliers who have consistently treated it as a milch cow. For instance, supplying old switch gear long after new developments came on the scene, operating restrictive price rings in cable supply, etc.

In general also, British telecomms spends much less on Research and Development (R + D) than other countries. West Germany's Siemens spent 8.0 per cent of its total telecomms sales on R + D in 1975, Plessey spent 3.2 per cent. Something like a quarter of all British telecomms R + D in 1975 was paid for by the PO contracts anyway.

Yet another enemy for the industry has emerged in the form of the EEC Commission. At the moment there is relatively little international trade in telecomms equipment because of differing national specifications. The EEC is going to change all that by ordering 'harmonisation' and instructing the PO to accept contracts with continental suppliers. A forewarning of this was given in 1975 by the awarding of a £25m contract for electronic equipment in London to Ericsson of Sweden. Because of low R + D, Britain's suppliers are losing their share in the growing export of new types of equipment to other countries, while at the same time money which should be going into this is being exported fast by GEC and Plessey etc, into Europe.

The whole story is one of complete capitalist profligacy. Is Britain to have a telecomms industry? Are its people to be discarded and scattered as part of technical change? Our answer is No! People are industry and progress. New tech-

nology must serve the producer and the consumer - not capitalism.

SHIPBUILDING

One of the effects of capitalism's crisis is that fewer goods are travelling on the high seas. While this has had a devastating effect on shipbuilding worldwide - a 20 per cent cutback in tonnage launched - for Britain it is the pretext upon which the government will try to obliterate much of what little remains of shipbuilding. Even in 1955 Britain produced over a quarter of all new tonnage launched in the world. By 1973 it was less than 4 per cent - employment in the industry fell from 130,000 in 1955 to 69,000 today. Orders for new ships in 1975 were down to 67,000 gross tonnes (grt) compared with 862,000 grt in 1974.

British ship owners are fast deserting British yards. From 1963 to 1972 the volume of shipping delivered to British owners increased by 17 per cent. Over the same period the volume of shipping delivered to the home fleet from abroad rose by over 800 per cent! British owners have shown a complete contempt for the shipbuilding industry. Over the past 5 years, for instance, they have ordered about 3.7m tonnes of shipping per year, 37 per cent of which was built in Britain. During 1975 they ordered only 0.625m tonnes, only 0.05m of which were placed in British yards - a mere 8 per cent - so much for 'patriotism'.

The history of shipbuilding has been one of continued destruction, sanctified and blessed by numerous official reports - the Geddes Report, the Booz-Allen Report, etc , etc . There were 'too many yards', 'too many workers', 'too many unions', 'too many disputes', - their only answer - cut and cut again! Take taxpayers money and enforce closures.

Now Varley and the nationalised industry chiefs renew their

threats. Nationalisation, which it was hoped would finally provide security of employment in an industry starved of investment, now only precedes yet another round of redundancies - all in areas like Clydeside and the North East, which not only draw their identity from this industry, but which already have a level of unemployment well above the national average. The Financial Times (15/2/76) has estimated that up to 10,000 will be sacked this year, and another 20,000 by 1980 - perhaps 40 per cent of the workforce.

Meanwhile parliament postures. There is a great commotion over the Bill. Tory shadow minister Heseltine states the obvious, that unemployment will follow nationalisation - as if that were a vindication of that free-booting capitalist philosophy which has always dominated the industry.

No cosy worker's participation scheme in the new style management can obscure the fact that there is a thorough going conspiracy, both at home and abroad, against those who work in British yards. In addition to Varley, the General Council of British Shipping opposes trade union calls for import bans. In Brussels, the EEC Commission has drawn up plans, in collusion with European shipbuilders, to cut Britain's 'excess capacity' and to forbid import controls and 'unfair' government assistance. The OECD says British yards must close.

Only one thing is clear, only those who work in the industry have any loyalty and commitment to its future. They have said enough is enough! For an industrial island to be denied the capacity to build ships is treachery. The gauntlet has been thrown down. Shipbuilding must not be destroyed.

TRANSPORT

The Government Green Paper on transport policy represents the latest and most vicious attack on Britain's transport system. It follows directly from the original Beeching philo-

sophy of 'making the railways pay'. It proposes cuts in expenditure, a phasing-out of subsidies to passenger and freight traffic, and a raising of fares and charges; and all this in the name of social justice - "We cannot afford to subsidise public transport indiscriminately - these subsidies tend to benefit the better off more than the poor." says the minister.

Railwaymen repudiate this absolutely, says the NUR paper, "...go out to the actual trains, and we don't just mean in the busy south-east, and watch out, because on many services you will be crushed by proletarian crowds who still use the trains despite high fares. Talk to railway passenger managers in different areas and they will tell you that many services are gaining traffic substantially. See the packed excursion trains. Search them for the richer two top categories of people. You'll be lucky not to get a bover boot in your shin."

The conspiracy to destroy the railways has been both ruthless and relentless - the construction consortia who build motorways and destroy farmland - the freight companies with their juggernauts now coming from the EEC - the motor industry with its throw-away products - the petrol companies - and most important the government which regards motor tax as a lucrative source of revenue. All these have combined to foster the grand illusion of the private motor car and mass 'personal' mobility. Thus public transport is destroyed, loses more money every year, while motoring, once a luxury, becomes a necessity and gets ever more expensive - and still over 45 per cent of all households have no access to a car!

Beeching said railways were obsolete. His report in 1963 proposed a reduction in the railways network from 17,500 miles in 1962, to 8,000 miles. Now the government says less than 4,000 miles must remain. The long-term aim is to abolish railways and public transport altogether, condemning us to immobility.

The last twelve years in particular have been a disaster. The total number of passenger miles travelled has grown, but

for rail the figure fell between 1963 and 1973 from 22,400m miles to 21,900m miles, similarly public road transport fell from 41,400m miles to 33,800m miles. Yet private motor transport rose from 115,500 miles to 223,500m miles. Rail freight too has shrunk; from 1954 when rail took 40 per cent of all freight mileage to a mere 17.5 per cent in 1974. By 1972, 86 per cent of all freight by weight went by road - under 9 per cent by rail - 2.5 per cent by coastal shipping and less than a third of 1 per cent by canal.

The transfer of goods from rail to road has been an attack on every community. The struggle of the people of the Aire Valley in Yorkshire illustrates but one struggle in the fight against the juggernauts.

As the losses of the National Bus Company are allowed to mount year by year, the response of the government is to cut the more heavily subsidised rural routes, turning the clock back and creating a new rural isolation - especially for the young and the old.

However, railways and public transport are not just to be defended as public services, they are the arteries of an industrial nation. Besides this they are the safest means of transport. The Medical Research Council estimates that road accidents now cost over £500m per annum and they account for over half the deaths of young men aged between 15 and 24.

Yet as public passenger transport is destroyed the all-motor-car transport dream is collapsing too. Car production was down by 17 per cent in 1975 and, taking the industry as a whole, 52,900 people were sacked. The motorist is exploited too. Total revenue from motor tax in 1974 - 75 was £2330m. while expenditure on roads was only £1129m.

The battle to save public transport is the responsibility of us all - it must be united with the fight for the right to work in the motor industry. Not, however, to produce obsolete cars which cannot be sold, but buses, and trains, the means to transport the working class. There must be a revolution for transport!

CONCLUSION

Britain was the first industrial country. Where we led, all others had to follow. Our industrial revolution marked the birth of the modern world. It showed the way to potential abundance, to the advance of science, to the defeat of misery, ignorance and disease - in the end the way to socialism. Yet no sooner had capitalism triumphed in Britain than it began its long decline. It could not unite industry and human progress and was only ever able to expand temporarily at the expense of rival capitalisms, and always at the expense of the people.

Today, because of the rise of the working class and the socialist countries, its decline is even more rapid. Capitalism in Britain is exhausted. There is nothing new. All the contradictions of a dying and bankrupt system find their sharpest expression here. We are a highly skilled people; yet there is no substantial industrial advance. The ruling class seeks to escape from our irrepressible struggle - and thus to prolong its life by devouring the very source of labour upon which it feeds. In every sector of industry the same picture is seen. No investment in people, in new ideas, and less and less education. Only more cuts - more rationalisation - more closures - more redundancy - and the ever growing flight of capital abroad. What potential and yet what criminal waste!

There is only one course which can save Britain from capitalism - revolution. We must make every struggle, in every arena, an investment to that end. We were the first modern working class. We must lead again. Britain must become a workshop of revolution. We must shake the world!

FOR A FUTURE!

FOR THE WORKING CLASS!

FOR AN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION!



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